

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
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MEMORANDUM OF INFORMATION

Subj: Berlin Situation (C)

1. The Special USIB Sub-committee on the Berlin Situation, Special Report dated 29 May 1961, concludes that:

a. Khrushchev stated to Ambassador Thompson on 23 May that he considers Berlin the main topic for discussion at Vienna. We do not feel, however, that he is setting the stage for a showdown with the President. Khrushchev's interest in negotiating a settlement is still evident. Nevertheless, Khrushchev in his conversation with Ambassador Thompson and in a similar talk with the West German ambassador last month implied a deadline of late 1961 or early 1962 for a final Soviet decision whether to go ahead with a separate treaty. However, he has been careful to avoid committing Soviet prestige to an exact schedule in public.

b. Khrushchev maintained his position that the USSR will sign a peace treaty with East Germany and transfer control over allied military access if no agreement can be reached. Khrushchev repeatedly emphasized his previous contention that after a separate treaty the West will not have free access without coming to terms with the East German regime.

c. The timing of the 23 May conversation was intended to make early negotiations an attractive alternative to the threatened conclusion of a separate peace treaty. Khrushchev's statements to Ambassador Thompson provide further evidence that Moscow intends to concentrate on obtaining Western agreement to an interim solution for Berlin. The ideas of a new summit meeting and further high-level negotiations have begun to appear in the Soviet propaganda buildup for the Vienna talks, and we expect that these themes will become more prominent.

d. While Khrushchev's remarks undoubtedly serve the Soviet Premier's tactical purposes in preparing for his talks with the President, they also point up his basic dilemma. On the one hand, Khrushchev's long standing and repeated commitments to sign a separate treaty if he fails to obtain satisfaction from the West probably act as a form of pressure on the Soviet leader. On the other hand, despite Khrushchev's repeated expressions of skepticism regarding the West's willingness to resort to war over Berlin, his actions during the past two and one half years suggest that he is not sufficiently certain what the Western response in a crisis would be and that he still prefers a negotiated solution.

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